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Letter dated 15 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In a pattern that is as familiar as it is distasteful, the Permanent Representative of Armenia, in his letter of 1 March 2004 addressed to you (S/2004/168), has once again permitted himself to become utterly engrossed in the plethora of myths, distortions and groundless accusations with regard to my country.

There is a strong temptation to refrain from condescending to the totally misleading, destructive and unprofessional rhetoric that permeated this letter full of slander and libel.

On the other hand, there is a real need to bring clarity to a number of points raised in order to prevent consolidation of another Armenian myth, all of them being faulty and dangerous. I am doing so because I believe in the obvious wisdom of thinking that sometimes the enemy of truth is not a lie but a myth.

It is exactly the myth of assuming that the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan has never been part of Azerbaijan and was "transferred by Stalin to Soviet Azerbaijan" that led Armenia to unleash the war of aggression against Azerbaijan through occupation and unlawful annexation of its Nagorny Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

It is a historical fact that first Armenians appeared in Karabakh in 1828. This happened as a result of the policies of tsarist Russia, after the end of Russian-Persian wars, to "Armenize" the Azerbaijani Khanate of Karabakh and to plant a long-term source of instability there. The memorial that was mounted by Armenians in Nagorny Karabakh in 1978 on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of arrival of first Armenians from the Persian region of Maraga to Karabakh serves as a clear testimony to this. However, the memorial remained there for only 10 years because, in 1988, when Armenia launched its aggression against Azerbaijan under the pretext of the "realization of the right to self-determination for Armenians in Nagorny Karabakh", the inscription on the memorial, "Maraga — 150", immediately disappeared. It is not difficult to guess why this was done.

The above memorial fixed very important date — when migration of Armenians to Karabakh began.

As to the above-mentioned decision of the Stalin regime, there is irrefutable documentary evidence suggesting that the decision "to retain" (and definitely not "to transfer") Nagorny Karabakh within Azerbaijan was not taken on 5 July 1921 by

Stalin himself, but rather by a collegial body, the Caucasus Bureau of the Russian Communist Party, which was made up of only two Azerbaijanis, several Armenians as well as representatives of other nationalities.

With regard to warmed-over accusations of massacres of Armenians in Sumgayit, Ganja and Baku, I would suggest that my Armenian counterpart, before succumbing to another bout of Azerbaijano-phobia and hysteria, first answer a simple but very pertinent question: would these skillfully thought-out provocations, orchestrated and carried out by Armenian terrorist organization "Krunk" and the Soviet KGB, have occurred back in 1988 had it not been for the forceful and inhumane deportation by Armenia, in late 1987 and early 1988, of 200,000 ethnic Azerbaijanis who had lived in the Kafan and Megri regions of Armenia for centuries? Many of those terrorized people, deprived of everything they had, found their temporary refuge in the city of Sumgayit and other cities and towns of Azerbaijan.

The Armenian side will probably have a hard time explaining the fact that several days before the events several Armenian and other television stations had already arrived in Azerbaijan in order to report on the "forthcoming" pogroms, whereas many well-to-do Armenian families residing in Sumgayit had left the city well in advance of the events.

It is a well-documented fact that in the course of these events, which were aimed at creating the atmosphere of chaos and unrest, Armenians were active participants among those who carried out pogroms, and that one Armenian was even one of the principal murderers and looters during those tragic days — a member of "Krunk", the three-times convicted felon Eduard Grigoryan, who himself murdered five Armenians.

Reference to the response of Azerbaijan to the "peaceful path" chosen by Armenians "to exercise their right to self-determination" is totally misleading and irrelevant. Does Armenia consider the creation of armed formations of militants, the illegal transfer of arms to Nagorny Karabakh, the implementation of acts of sabotage against the Azerbaijani State and, finally, the murder of two Azerbaijani civilians on 24 February 1988 to be "peaceful means of attaining their goals"?

As to the notorious argument that the Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan was carried out in order to ensure the exercise of their right to self-determination by Armenians living in the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, this is nothing more than an Armenian design to use this high principle of international law as a cover and to illegally occupy and annex the territory of a sovereign State — and a Member of the United Nations. Armenians have already exercised their right to self-determination once in the formation of a sovereign State — the Republic of Armenia — and cannot use this pretext to undermine fundamental norms and principles of international law, especially in carrying out their plan by violence and use of force, in violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

With regard to the reference to the document of the European Parliament dating back to the time when both Armenia and Azerbaijan were part of the Soviet Union (!), and which the Armenian ambassador decided to take out of the archives in a clear display of a cherry-picking exercise, this came as no surprise to me, since he would have failed to find any relevant reference since that time, especially after the Republic of Azerbaijan became independent, established cooperative relations

with the European Parliament and started to confront the biased and destructive attempts of Armenian circles in Europe lobbying to influence decision-making processes in international instances.

Instead, I would like to bring to your attention another official document of the European Parliament of 26 February 2002, which states that the European Union-Azerbaijan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee session "at the outset of the meeting paid a tribute with the minute of silence to the victims of Khojaly tragedy of 25 and 26 February 1992" and, with reference to the situation in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan:

- "... urged the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group to strengthen its efforts and to elaborate proposals to achieve a just, equitable and lasting solution to the conflict on the basis of all principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of state borders;
- "condemned the fait accompli practices, which may not serve as a basis for a settlement, and stressed that neither the current situation within the occupied areas of the Republic of Azerbaijan, nor any action undertaken there to consolidate the status-quo, may be recognized as legally valid;
- "noted with regret the reluctance of Armenia to accept the proposal of Azerbaijan, as supported by the European Union, to withdraw its forces from the occupied territories alongside the Baku-Nakhchivan-Yerevan railway, in combination with restoration of the railway, which represents a unique package of measures for settlement of the conflict and reestablishment of cooperation, and called for the opportunity to be taken to remove the situation from the current stalemate".

Rather than cynically pulling on the mask of a victim and tailoring history to its own narrow selfish interests, Armenia should be ashamed and repentant for the crimes committed against humanity. These crimes have no expiration date, and we are confident that the day will come when the leaders of the criminal regime of Armenia that stood behind and actually perpetrated the Khojaly genocide of Azerbaijanis will be brought to international justice.

Indeed, Armenia perpetrated the crime, which, in its gravity, has taken its place in modern history alongside the acts of genocide that took place in Srebrenica, Rwanda and Burundi. The Azerbaijani-populated town of Khojaly in the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, with approximately 7,000 inhabitants, had been under Armenian siege for more than four months and people were suffering from lack of medical service and food.

On the night of 25 and 26 February 1992, Armenian military units attacked this town, from five directions and completely destroyed and burnt the town, massacring its population.

In the course of one night, Armenian armed units massacred 613 innocent civilians, among them 106 women, 83 children and 70 old people, simply because they were Azerbaijanis. Six families were killed entirely, 25 children lost both parents and 130 children lost one of their parents. More than 1,000 civilians were injured with bullet wounds, 1,275 civilians were taken hostage. Fifty-six people were burnt alive with especial severity and brutality, their heads scalped, skulls

battered and eyes put out, while pregnant women's stomachs were slashed open with bayonets.

The Khojaly massacre was not an accidental outbreak of violence in the course of warfare, but rather a deliberate act of mass murder, with excessive use of force aimed at intimidating the Azerbaijani population of Nagorny Karabakh. That is how one of the perpetrators of the crime, the current defence minister of the Republic of Armenia Serzh Sarkissian, cynically admits to the reason behind Khojaly massacre: "... Before Khojaly, Azerbaijanis thought that they were joking with us, they thought that the Armenians were people who could not raise their hand against the civilian population. We were able to break that stereotype. And that's what happened". *

Another fabrication, which the Armenian ambassador hardly believes himself, is the myth about the constructive and peace-loving approach of Armenia throughout the 12 years of the negotiation process and the alleged intransigence of Azerbaijan.

Is it not Armenia that continued to be in non-compliance with the resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) of the United Nations Security Council?

Is it not the war party in Armenia that has consistently undermined any possible breakthrough in negotiations and toppled the then President of Armenia, L. Ter-Petrossian (after the latter had reached an agreement on the settlement with the former President of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, and the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group), or rejected other proposals put forward by international mediators?

Is it not Armenia that first creates myths about certain alleged arrangements and then tries to convince the whole world that that is true, thus stalemating the conflict even more?

Finally, is it not Armenia that has rejected any overture of peace proposed by honest international brokers, like the one supported by the European Union on the implementation of certain confidence-building measures to start up the stalemated peace process through withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from the five occupied regions of Azerbaijan (Zangelan, Djabrail, Gubadly, Fizuli and Aghdam) in combination with the restoration of the Baku-Nakhchivan-Yerevan railroad?

This proposal is unacceptable to the "far-sighted" Armenian leadership, comprised of Karabakh war mongers turned national heroes, simply because "poor and long-suffering" Armenia will then be deprived of another of its favourite myths about the so-called "blockade".

As to the tragic incident that occurred in Budapest, one should be extremely cautious in making any foregone conclusions and accusations while the investigation is still under way and not to try to cynically capitalize on this incident to appease internal consumption and misguide the international community.

Lastly, with regard to the accusations against the Azerbaijani leadership of "fuelling aggressiveness" in the society, the Armenian side should be aware of the fact that Azerbaijani society is united as never before in its determination to achieve

* Tomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War*, New York University, 2003, p. 172.

resolution of the conflict by means of eliminating the consequences of Armenian aggression. The leadership of Azerbaijan is committed to the peaceful solution of the conflict on the basis of norms and principles of international law.

What is indeed dangerous is the claim of Armenian President Kocharian, who suggested the thesis of the incompatibility of Azerbaijanis and Armenians and, therefore, the impossibility of their co-existence within one state. I would like to remind him in this regard, of the fact that whereas all Azerbaijanis have been ousted from Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh, there are around 30,000 Armenians still living in Baku and other parts of Azerbaijan.

In conclusion, let me emphasize once more that no matter how actively Armenia tries to camouflage its annexionist plans with regard to sovereign Azerbaijan under the pretext of the high principle of the right of peoples to self-determination, all these efforts, which are in contravention of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, are doomed to failure.

No amount of poorly concocted myths, letters and statements, distorted texts, misinterpretations of history or abusive diplomatic manoeuvers can alter that basic reality. We all have the opportunity to start doing so, today, by rejecting the aggressive and cynical Armenian rhetoric and bringing the aggressor-State and its criminal puppet regime in the occupied Azerbaijani territories to justice.

It is only the ending of the morally bankrupt strategy of aggression glorifying occupation as the national cause that would obviate the need for hatred and contempt, pave the way for a lasting peace and end the suffering of both peoples.

I should be grateful, if you would have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar T. **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations